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17 August 1960

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MEMORANDUM FOR : Director of Central Intelligence
SUBJECT : Powers' Trial--First Day

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1. Although the first day of the trial has apparently produced nothing sensational, a few general and tentative comments may be in order and certain specific points are worth noting.

2. General Comments:

a. Despite the initial propaganda buildup, the proceedings themselves have been orderly, apparently fair, and free of sensational revelations and implications. As a result, accounts appearing in the Western press will no doubt leave the general impression that Powers has not been pressured or brainwashed and that "Soviet justice" is largely free of the abuses generally associated with the past.

b. Although the proceedings themselves are thus far free from propaganda histrionics, Soviet domestic commentary is nevertheless using the occasion to beat the propaganda drum against "the American warmongers".

c. Powers' answers to a number of significant questions have been surprisingly vague--even on a few matters about which he is presumably knowledgeable. It is impossible to say at this stage whether this is a result of effective and admirable "holding of the line" by Powers in the face of Soviet cross-examination, or whether this is a part of a calculated design to eliminate any suspicion that the proceedings are carefully staged and manipulated.

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d. The defense attorney is apparently seeking to portray Powers as a reluctant and unfortunate victim of circumstances, who has been led into his present plight through economic pressures and misleading promises, and whose humble family background should be taken into account in fixing his responsibility. Whether this effort by the defense counsel is genuine or not we cannot say, but it is at least consistent with Soviet judicial practice, under which it is customary to portray defendants as victims of circumstances in an effort to mitigate the severity of their punishment.

3. Specific Points:

a. Powers was apparently successful in evading answers to several questions on which he was presented and concerning which the Soviets would presumably wish him to be more specific, i.e., the nature of the plane's technical equipment, whether or not it had at any time borne markings or insignia, whether the operation was primarily under military or civilian control, and the precise role in the operation of NASA.

b. Powers expressed regret at the effect of his flight on the Summit Conference.



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d. Powers did not concede, in response to the prosecutor's questions, that the plane might have carried a nuclear weapon.

4. Conclusions:

Thus far, it appears either that Powers admirably held the line on a number of matters on which his testimony could have been more complete or more useful to Soviet purposes, or that sensational revelations have been saved for tomorrow or the next day. Under the latter theory, it might be argued that the Soviets have used the first day to establish the reliability of Powers as a witness, and the legality of the Soviet judicial process; having done this they may then proceed to develop specific details about (a) key personnel involved in the program, (b) various practices, procedures,

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etc., used in carrying out the program, (c) history of particular operations conducted under the program, and (d) involvement of other nations.



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Note:

Attached not part of
18 Aug NSC
briefing per se.

Prepared for DCD
after he requested
views on testimony and
available to him before
NSC session.

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